



Governor or Tribal Leader  
State, Territory, or Tribe  
City, State zip

Dear :

The Bush Administration is firmly committed to sound management and effective conservation of our ocean and coastal resources. We can only meet this commitment by partnering with state, local, and tribal governments and the public where substantial resource management responsibilities reside. Management of our Nation's marine conservation areas is no exception. Roughly 85 percent of the Nation's existing marine conservation areas are under the jurisdiction of state, local, and tribal governments. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we are seeking your comments on the attached *Draft Framework for Developing the National System of Marine Protected Areas* (draft Framework).

Complimentary to the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*, and fulfilling requirements of the Executive Order on Marine Protected Areas, the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of the Interior developed the draft Framework. The draft Framework represents the culmination of several years' work to better understand the nation's existing place-based marine conservation efforts and gather an extensive set of recommendations from governmental and non-governmental stakeholders around the country. With this information, the draft Framework offers a proposal for working together at regional and national levels to support the effective use of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and achieve common goals for conserving the Nation's vital marine resources.

Although State, local, and tribal participation in the National System of MPAs is voluntary, we recognize the principal role of state, local and tribal governments in working with federal agencies toward its development and implementation. We believe working together under this effort will help to increase the efficient protection of important marine resources, contribute to the nation's overall social and economic health, support government agency cooperation and integration, and improve the public's access to scientific information and decision-making concerning the Nation's marine resources.

The enclosed document is available for public comment for 145 days, after which time the National MPA Center will review and respond to comments and publish a final Framework. We encourage your review, and look forward to receiving your comments so the resulting final document supports the variety of our Nation's MPA efforts.

We appreciate your interest and look forward to continuing to work with you on this collaborative effort.

Sincerely,

  
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Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Enclosure